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ABSTRACT

A total of 230 second through fifth grade boys and girls from five private schools in the San Francisco Bay area were asked to keep a record of the books they read for pleasure over the period of a month to determine whether there were differences between the books chosen across the grades and between sexes. The students recorded the books on a record sheet according to name of book, author, fiction/nonfiction, and the subject category of the book. Data showed that although there were many similarities in the types of books chosen for reading pleasure by second through fifth grade girls and boys, there were also significant differences in the choices they made. Girls read many more books in the category of family stories than did boys. They also read more romance and historical fiction. Boys read more books about animals and science than did girls. Two major findings not found in previous research were (1) that girls tended to read more books written by women authors and boys more books written by men authors, and that, in the case of the girls, they read more books by women authors as they matured; and (2) that students read less nonfiction as they grew older. (HOD)

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DIFFERENCES IN BOOK CHOICES FOR READING PLEASURE
BETWEEN SECOND THROUGH FIFTH GRADE
BOYS AND GIRLS

BY
MARY WATSON

A Paper Submitted in Fulfillment
of the Requirements in

Education 359: Educational Research

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INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The major question of this study is there a difference between the books chosen for reading pleasure by second through fifth grade boys and girls. Sub-questions include the following:

- 1) Do boys and girls read differently according to subject area?
- 2) Do boys read more non-fiction than girls?
- 3) Is there any correlation between the sex of the author and the sex of the reader? Do girls tend to read books written by women and boys read books written by men?
- 4) As children get older, do they read in different subject areas; do they read more non-fiction than previously?

Significance of the Problem

If this thesis proves true and elementary school boys do differ from elementary school girls in their choice of books, this should have an impact on parents, librarians, teachers and reading specialists when they make available reading matter for children at this level. It is crucial to understand what children are reading and their interests, so as to provide appropriate materials that will motivate them to read and learn. In fact, it has been shown that the interest which the child has in the material read will

influence his or her ability to read it (Barbe 1961). Is the lack of availability of good non-fiction books written for elementary school children (as compared with fiction books) a handicap for young boy readers?

It has been said that children as a group are reading about the same types of things that parents, teachers and librarians want them to read about (Rudman 1955). However, as the mother is still the dominant person rearing children and the majority of elementary school teachers and librarians are women, this may have an impact on books made available and how children are guided in reading.

Certainly it is important for adults working with children to know their interests and to capitalize on them to stimulate interest in reading and this study will provide some clarification on this issue. It may be that adults can also guide and encourage children to be more balanced in their reading, to help girls seek out factual books of particular interest and likewise to introduce boys to more fictional books about people. As more women are entering the working world and more men participate more in the life of the family and home, if children were more balanced in their reading, they would be better prepared for the changing roles of our society.

In conclusion, the main benefit of this study will be to examine what books elementary school children are reading.

These results will be useful to adults working with children when trying to motivate children to read by being sure they have books of appropriate interest available. In addition, if the hypothesis proves true, and boys and girls do read differently in some areas, teachers, parents, librarians could guide children to a more balanced reading program to more fully prepare them for the changing roles of our society.

Statement of the Hypotheses

The main hypothesis of this study is that there is a difference between the books chosen for reading pleasure by second through fifth grade boys and girls. Minor hypotheses include the following:

- 1) Boys and girls tend to read differently according to subject area and that although there are differences, more recently these are lessening.
- 2) Boys read more non-fiction than girls.
- 3) There is a correlation between the sex of the author and the sex of the reader. Girls tend to read books written by women and boys read books written by men.

Assumptions Limitations and Delimitations

This study is limited to a relatively small sampling (220 at most) of elementary students in five private schools in the San Francisco Bay Area. The students come mostly

from middle to upper middle class backgrounds and do not reflect the wider ethnic and socio-economic background of the general student populations in this area.

The students' record sheets will be introduced and kept in the classroom and responses may be influenced by the school setting and the degree to which teachers support the study and make time available for students to keep records of the books they read. Certain students may not keep true records in an effort to please the teacher or researcher.

Younger children may have some problems with the reading and writing necessary to keep the record sheets.

Books of interest to some students may not be available to them, so there may be a discrepancy between the books they list and their preferred interests.

Definition of Terms

Books read for pleasure: books chosen by students to read in their free time, chosen according to their own interests, not for school purposes.

Fiction: a story which is not true, which is made up by the author.

Non-fiction: a story of information which is true, something that really happened.

Reading interest: refers to a relatively dynamic state. The person seeks out particular objects and activities. Usually

this is ascertained by what has actually been read (Getzels 1956).

Reading preference: refers to a relatively passive state, readiness to receive one object against another, refers to what might be done (Getzels 1956).

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Reading Difference between Girls and Boys

Most research of the last 40 years indicates that there is a difference between what elementary school boys and girls will read when reading for pleasure (Thorndike 1940; Norvell 1958; Wolfson 1960; Gaver 1968; Downen 1971; Feeley 1972; Chiu 1973; Beta Upsilon 1974; Holland 1976; Kirsch 1976; Moray 1978; Feeley 1982; Summers and Lukasevich 1983). In only one study by Rudman in 1955 was it stated that few sharp differences according to sex were found in elementary school readers. However, he did go on to list these differences in subject matter.

In 1958 Norwell did one of the most comprehensive studies based on the opinions of 124,000 children in grades three through six in New York. This research spanned 25 years and showed boys preferred reading about adventurous action, courage, heroism, humor, real people and animals in that order and girls favored adventure without violent action, mystery, love, home and school life, pets, patriotism and sentiment.

In 1960 Wolfson did a study of the reading interests of 2000 boys and girls in grades three through six in Norwalk, Connecticut. Children were given a reading interest inventory administered orally. Results showed considerable overlapping of interests between boys and girls in many categories. Boys chose more from the categories of machines and applied science,

physical science, sports and adventure than did girls. Girls chose more from the areas of fine and applied arts, family life and children, fantasy and personal problems than did boys. More boys expressed interest in more categories than did girls.

In 1973 Chiu found in a book preference paired-comparison study of 99 fourth graders from north-central Indiana that boys preferred to read in the areas of biography, science, social studies and sports while girls significantly more preferred adventure, fantasy, humor and poetry. There were no differences in preferences for animal stories and mystery, both groups rating preference for mystery quite high.

In 1983 Summers and Lukasevich administered a reading preference inventory to 1,127 children in grades five, six and seven in three Canadian communities in British Columbia and Ontario, Canada. Highly significant differences in preference were found for 11 out of 14 themes. Generally, it was shown that males have a stronger preference for themes of history/geography, sports, science, fantasy and travel; females have stronger preference for animals, child/family, poetry, biography, romance and mystery. Both males and females have similar preferences for adventure, humor and nature study. The common denominator for both was clearly excitement and thrills in reading.

In comparing the results of the four studies just mentioned, science, sports, adventure/social studies/travel

seem to be fairly consistent themes for boys. Girls more often mention family/school life, poetry, fantasy and romance. Generally, however, it seems that while studies consistently report boy/girl differences in reading, these differences vary somewhat from study to study. In the two more recent studies similar interests between the reading of girls and boys were noted but they differed a bit in content from study to study (Chiu: animal stories, mysteries; Summers and Lukasevich: mystery, fantasy, adventure).

It is of particular interest to note if the areas of difference in children's reading have changed over the years to reflect the changing roles of men and women in our society. Joan Feeley did two similar inventories of reading interest of fourth and fifth graders in Hackensack, New Jersey; one in 1970-71 and one in 1978-79 with 532 children. She found that the reading pattern for boys hasn't changed much. Sports is still at the top of the list in both studies. Excitement themes remained high and social empathy (people with everyday problems) themes and content about the arts were still at the bottom of the boys' list. The girls' pattern had changed. Sports moved from a bottom position to midway and social studies and science dropped to the bottom. As in the first study, animals, fantasy and social empathy continued to be the most favored area for girls. This report concluded that although boys and girls in the middle grades continue to have different

interest patterns, some of the differences are lessening. For example, girls increased interest in sports may be the result of the fact they now see themselves as active participants and so are more interested in this area.

Thorndike (1940) found that the mild adventure study with a child hero is likely to be feminine in its appeal, especially if it revolves wholly or partly around feminine characters. In stories of child life in other lands, if the story centered on a boy, the sex difference was small, when it centered on a girl, the difference was very large in that the story about girls was appealing mainly only to girls. These findings were shown to be true also in 1978 by Moray when she reported that girls will read a book considered to be of interest to boys, although boys ordinarily will not read a book considered to be of interest to girls.

In 1974 a report of the Beta Upsilon Chapter, Pi Lambda Theta, Kansas City analyzed differences in content as well as reasons for liking or disliking books read. The 811 children ages 7 through 12 included volunteers to fill out Reading Interest Forms indicating books they read, why they liked or disliked the books, and areas of interest. Generally girls mentioned plot and character more often as a reason for liking a book, consistent with the greater interest in people held by girls of all ages in this study. Both boys and girls most often stated content as being important.

Research has also supported the thesis that boys read more non-fiction than do girls (Thorndike 1940; Steiert 1966; King 1967; Kirsch 1967; Harris 1970; Blair 1974). Steiert (1966) noted that while girls chose fiction versus non-fiction, boys chose non-fiction and fiction about equally. Kirsch (1967) showed that both girls and boys read more non-fiction as they get older. Blair (1974) noted that boys, especially those below grade level in reading, included a fair portion of non-fiction books in their reading choice.

No research has been found to indicate correlation between the sex of the author and the sex of the young reader.

Age Changes

Many studies have indicated that as children grow older and mature in their reading habits, some areas of interest change (Rudman 1955; Ford/Koplyay 1968; King 1967; Downen 1971; Chiu 1973; Summers and Lukasevich 1983). Rudman (1955) reported that as children progress through the grades, they show increasing interest in mystery stories and fairy tales. They also seem more interested in reading about other children, sports and recreational interests. Ford and Koplyay (1968) used a non-verbal picture story preference test with two groups of 373 kindergarten through third grade children: one in an upper-middle class suburban school system and the other in a predominantly Negro, urban school district. Girls showed an increasing interest in the category of history and science as

they grew older. Summers and Lukasevich (1983) found that girls preference for romance is rather low in grade five and becomes stronger as they get to grade seven.

Zimet (1966) reports that as the child matures, the rate of change of interest gradually diminishes; the more mature the child, the broader and deeper his or her range of interests. This is supported by the findings of Weintraub and others (1972) who said there was a decrease in the number of interests as the students progressed from the fourth to sixth grade.

The Beta Upsilon Chapter study (1974) found that the reading interests of 11 year olds varied a great deal with sex- more variance than was found at younger ages and that older children made more critical comments than the younger ones.

Harris (1970) stated that sex differences appear earlier than ages eight or nine and King (1967) reported that marked differences in reading interests between girls and boys become evident after age eight and that differences in fourth grade increased appreciably in fifth and sixth grade.

Blair (1974) and Summers and Lukasevich (1983) found that sex was the most influential factor in reading interest differences in elementary school children as contrasted with reading ability or grade level (Blair) and with community or grade (Summers and Lukasevich). Chiu (1973) noted that the children's reading abilities were not related to their reading preferences and Wolfson (1960) likewise found no relationship between answers

to his reading interest inventory and factors of reading achievement and intelligence test scores.

Reading Achievement Differences

Research has also been done on why there are these boy/girl differences in reading achievement as well as reading interest. Although this study does not address this issue directly, it is relevant to include some of the findings since they relate to possible action parents, teachers and librarians can take when working with children.

It has been stated that as early as age two, girls in general seem more interested in people than in things; boys seem more interested in objects than in people. In the spontaneous stories children between two and three tell, the stories of girls center around notions of socialization and mention more people than do those of boys. In the stories boys tell, they themselves are the leading characters (Ilg, Ames 1976).

Research has shown that sex differences favoring females do exist in reading performance, especially in the lower grades (Lehr 1982). In a large part, this may be due to cultural expectations. In America young boys are encouraged to spend more time and energy on large muscle activities whereas girls are taught to engage in more sedentary types of behavior. Therefore, parents who approve of their daughters reading tend to worry if sons choose reading over playing ball (Lehr 1982). Also, teachers expect girls to perform better in reading (Johnson 1976).

As a possible result of such cultural expectations, in a study done by Wellbrow, Levine and Engin in 1981 it was found that fifth and sixth grade boys are more likely to perceive of themselves as having difficulty with reading and fifth and sixth grade girls tend to perceive of themselves as receiving somewhat more reinforcement from their friends, parents, and teachers than do boys and so see themselves as receiving greater extrinsic reinforcement. Feeley has found in her two similar studies in 1972 and 1982 that girls prefer to read more than do boys. Vernon (1960) proposed that the heavy emphasis upon the word method of teaching in initial reading instruction may favor girls in that in intelligence tests girls do better on most verbal items and rote memory, while boys do better on tests of inductive reasoning and arithmetical ability.

Although generalizations about the reading habits of elementary school students can be helpful, classroom teachers, parents, librarians should realize that each child is unique in her or his interests (Purves and Beach 1972; Moray 1978). Students need a wide variety of reading materials which capitalize and expand on their interests.

In conclusion we see that research supports the main thesis of this paper: that there is a difference between the books chosen for reading pleasure by second through fifth grade boys and books chosen by second through fifth grade girls.

It also indicates that boys and girls read differently according to subject area, but that recently some of these differences are lessening. Boys read more non-fiction than do girls according to the research. No research was found to indicate correlation between the sex of the author and sex of the reader. Research did show that as children get older, they read in different subject areas and more non-fiction than previously.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Description of Research Design

This study is of the descriptive research genre and is based on children's records of the books they read for pleasure over the period of a month (four weeks of in-school time). Thus, the study clarifies students' interests through books they actually read rather than from a reading preference inventory which they fill out in terms of their preferences for certain subject areas.

Sampling Procedures

The students come from five private schools in the San Francisco Bay area: San Francisco Montessori School (29 students), The Waldorf School, based on the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner, (27 students), Rivendell School (11 students), French American International School (118 students) and Thehujah School in El Cerrito, a Hebrew American school (45 students). Students in the study are in grades two through five and are generally in the middle to upper middle class in terms of economic and cultural background.

Data-gathering Instruments

This researcher introduced the study to each class of students using the "Guidelines for Introduction of Study to Classes" (Appendix A). The students were each given a "Record

Sheet" (Appendix B) and "Book Category Sheet" (Appendix C) and asked to keep these in an easily accessible location in the classroom or in a homework folder. The children filled out the information at the top of the "Record Sheet" at this time and this researcher explained or elicited what was needed to know in order to use the form: the difference between fiction and non-fiction and the meaning of the "Book Category Sheet" categories. There was always time for students to ask questions and, in most cases, for them to initially record one book they were reading at the time so as to gain practice using the form.

The classroom teacher was given extra copies of the "Record Sheet" to give students who finished their first page and was urged to allow time in class at least once a week for students to record their books.

Statistical Treatment

Chi square analyses were done for all of the charts recording the questions of this study and the data found: "Boy/Girl Differences According to Subject Area," "Preferences for Fiction or Non-fiction Among Boys and Girls," "Preference of Girls to Read Books by Women Authors, of Boys to Read Books by Men authors," and "Changes in Reading Interests as Grade Level Increases."

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Differences According to Subject Area

The data analysed for this study does indicate that, while there are similarities in the books chosen for reading pleasure by second through fifth grade boys and girls, there are also definite differences.

Concerning the first sub-question, "Do boys and girls read differently according to subject area," data confirms that in 5 out of 21 categories according to chi square analysis, a significant difference is found between boys and girls in their reading habits. Girls tend to read more in the area of historical fiction than do boys. A very significant difference was found in the area of family stories. Girls read a great deal more in this subject area than do boys. Girls read books of romance, where no boys reported reading these. Very significant differences were found in that boys read more animal stories than do girls and more science books than do girls. (See Table 1.)

Of no significant difference, but of interest, is the fact that girls read more mystery, fairy tale/fable, fantasy/horror books than boys. However, it should be noted that, although of no significant difference, in this study 133 girls read 661 books (5 books per girl on average) and 97 boys read 409 books (4 books per boy on average). Girls tend to read a bit more than boys during their free time.

Looking at the total number of books read by both boys and girls, family stories are most popular followed by funny stories, adventure, mystery, fantasy/horror. With the exception of family stories, there were no significant differences between boys and girls in these latter categories in terms of types of books read. Certainly students are reading more fiction than non-fiction. Total fiction read was 959 books; total non-fiction read was 111 books. In non-fiction categories animal books are most popular followed by biography, autobiography and science.

For girls the most popular categories in order of preference were family stories, funny stories, adventure, mystery and fantasy/horror. In non-fiction reading girls preferred biography/autobiography and animals. For boys the most popular categories were adventure, funny stories, fantasy/horror, family stories, and mystery. In non-fiction boys preferred animals, then biography/autobiography and science.

No books were chosen by students in the areas of crafts, geography, hobbies, nature, other countries, plants or travel, although these categories were listed on the "Book Category Sheet."

The results of this study do not support the research by Joan Freeley (1979) that girls are reading more sports books than previously. Only 6 books about sports were read and 5 were read by boys. However, these results confirm that

as shown in previous research, both boys and girls look for excitement and thrills in reading. It confirms the findings that girls enjoy books involving family relationships and romance more than boys. Neither boys nor girls read much poetry, which was mentioned in the research as being preferred by girls. No significant difference was found between boys and girls in fantasy books which research showed was preferred by girls. However, the fantasy category in this study included horror, supernatural and ghost stories which was not always the case in the categories of previous research. Girls did read a few more fairy tale/fable books than boys, although there wasn't a significant difference.

As stated in previous research, boys found adventure stories of particular interest in this study. However, although boys do read more books than girls in science and sports, these are not main areas of interest, as has been shown in other studies.

Basically, the boy/girl reading preferences in previous research varied quite a bit from study to study but research did demonstrate there was a difference in interest. That major thesis of this study is also supported by the results outlined in this paper.

TABLE I
BOY/GIRL DIFFERENCES ACCORDING TO
SUBJECT AREA

	Books read by:		Total
	Boys	Girls	
Adventure	71	77	148
Mystery	50	83	133
Funny Stories	69	80	149
Science Fiction	9	7	16
Historical Fiction	7	25	32*
Family Stories	53	213	266**
Fairy Tales/Fables	12	21	33
Fantasy/Horror	53	79	132
Romance	0	14	14**
Jokes/Riddles	5	4	9
Poems	6	8	14
Myth/Legend	3	8	11
Biography/Autobiography	15	20	35
History	5	3	8
Animals	30	12	42**
Sports	5	1	6
Space	2	1	3
How to...	1	1	2
Science	12	3	15**
Geography	1	0	1
Holidays	0	1	1
TOTALS	409	661	1070

* .05 level chi square significance

** .01 level chi square significance

Preferences for Fiction or Non-fiction Among Boys and Girls

According to the results of this study, the answer to the question, "Do boys read more non-fiction than girls" is yes. When a chi-square analysis was performed comparing the number of fiction books and non-fiction books read by boys to that read by girls, there was a truly significant difference of more than .01 level. Boys do read more non-fiction than girls. This finding substantiates former research on this subject.

TABLE II
PREFERENCES FOR FICTION
OR NON-FICTION
AMONG BOYS
AND GIRLS

	Fiction Books Read		Non-fiction Books Read	
	Percentage		Percentage	
By Boys	338	(35%)	71	(64%)
By Girls	621	(65%)	40	(36%)
TOTALS	959	100%	111	100%

Preference of Girls to Read Books by Women Authors, of Boys
to Read Books by Men Authors

When using the chi square test to compare the number of books read by boys and girls written by women authors with the totals of books read by boys and girls, there was a truly significant difference (17.63) at the .01 level. Likewise, when comparing books read by boys and girls written by men authors and totals of books read by boys and girls, there was again a very significant difference (13.19) at the .01 level. (See Table III.) Thus, the thesis of this study, that there is a correlation between the sex of the author and the sex of the reader, is supported.

It is interesting to see that while both girls and boys tend to read more books written by authors of their own gender, the difference is a bit greater for girls, who read more books written by women than do boys read books written by men.

TABLE III
PREFERENCES OF GIRLS TO READ
BOOKS BY WOMEN AUTHORS;
BOYS TO READ BOOKS
BY MEN AUTHORS

	Books Read By Boys	Books Read By Girls	Total
Women Authors	146	383	529
Men Authors	236	256	492
Both	3	5	8
Unknown	24	17	41
Total Books Read	409	661	1070

Changes in Reading Interests as Grade Level Increases

As tested by the chi square, data of this study support the thesis that there is a significant difference at the .01 level in how girls and boys read fiction and non-fiction as they get older. (See Table IV.)

Looking at the trends in the fiction reading, girls are shown to increase in their reading of fiction as they mature. Although not as clear-cut for the boys, it does seem as if the fewer boys in the study at the fifth grade level are reading more fiction books than at the fourth and third grade levels. However, a greater number of second grade boys enjoyed fiction as compared with older boys.

In looking at patterns of reading for non-fiction books, it is fairly clear that for both boys and girls less non-fiction is read as they get older. (See Table IV.) The significant difference between boys and girls (7.68) is not as great for the non-fiction comparison as for the comparison of fiction books (22.72). This could reflect the degree to which the girls differ from boys in reading more fiction as they get older.

In only one category of non-fiction reading was there a chi square significant difference and that was to show fewer books about animals were read as students mature. (See Table VI.) Also, fewer non-fiction books were read in the categories of science, holidays, how to..., space, sports and animals as

students advanced in grade level. It must be kept in mind that out of a total of 1070 books read for this study, only 111 books were in the non-fiction category. Students prefer to read fiction.

In comparing books read by boys and girls written by men and women authors as grade level increases, there is a chi square .05 level of difference (4.06) between girls and boys reading men authors and a chi square .01 level of difference (37.62) between girls and boys reading women authors. (See Table V.) Thus, although there are some differences between girls and boys reading books written by men (boys seem to read fewer books by men as they get older, no clear-cut pattern for girls), the major finding here is that there is a strong pattern for girls to read more books by women as they get older. This pattern for girls could correlate with the fact that girls also read more family stories and romance as they get older and more of these books tend to be written by women authors. There is not a pattern for boys reading books by women authors.

When comparing total number of children tested in each grade to the total number of books read by each grade of children in various categories according to subject, chi square differences were found in 8 categories. (See Table VI.) These categories were adventure, mystery, science, fiction, historical fiction, family stories, fantasy/horror, romance

(girls only) were read as students got older. Fewer books of fantasy/horror and animals were read as students went up in grade level. Although of no significant difference, patterns indicate fewer funny stories, fairy tales and fables, jokes and riddles, poems, myth and legend, sports, space, how to..., and science books are read as children mature.

Categories which did not vary too much according to grade level included biography/autobiography and history. It is interesting to note that no poetry, science or space was read after third grade. More books about fantasy/horror were read by second graders than by older students.

These results agree with the thesis that as children get older, they do read in different subject areas. However, this study does not concur with the thesis that students read more non-fiction as they grow older; in fact, they read less.

TABLE IV
CHANGES IN READING INTERESTS
AS GRADE LEVEL INCREASES
FICTION/NON-FICTION

	2nd Grade	3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade
Fiction Books				
Boys	100	87	66	85
Girls	108	152	165	196
Non-Fiction Books				
Boys	35	25	6	5
Girls	10	17	6	7
Totals	253	281	243	293

TABLE V
CHANGES IN READING INTERESTS
AS GRADE LEVEL INCREASES
MEN/WOMEN AUTHORS

	2nd Grade	3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade
Men Authors				
Boys	72	63	50	51
Girls	66	63	52	75
Women Authors				
Boys	49	38	20	39
Girls	48	95	114	126
Totals	235	259	236	291

TABLE VI
CHANGES IN READING INTERESTS
AS GRADE LEVEL INCREASES
SUBJECT AREA

	Second Grade			Third Grade			Fourth Grade			Fifth Grade			Total
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	
Adventure	17	9	<u>26</u>	21	19	<u>40</u>	10	16	<u>26</u>	23	33	<u>56</u>	148**
Mystery	6	9	<u>15</u>	10	9	<u>19</u>	13	45	<u>58</u>	21	20	<u>41</u>	133**
Funny Stories	17	30	<u>47</u>	21	24	<u>45</u>	24	12	<u>36</u>	7	14	<u>21</u>	149
Science Fiction	2	0	<u>2</u>	1	1	<u>2</u>	2	3	<u>5</u>	4	3	<u>7</u>	16**
Historical Fict.	0	0	<u>0</u>	2	6	<u>8</u>	1	7	<u>8</u>	4	12	<u>16</u>	32**
Family Stories	15	28	<u>43</u>	11	51	<u>62</u>	10	55	<u>65</u>	17	79	<u>96</u>	266**
Fairy T/Fables	7	5	<u>12</u>	4	6	<u>10</u>	1	7	<u>8</u>	0	3	<u>3</u>	53
Fantasy/Horror	28	25	<u>53</u>	7	20	<u>27</u>	12	15	<u>27</u>	6	19	<u>25</u>	132*
Romance	0	0	<u>0</u>	0	1	<u>1</u>	0	3	<u>3</u>	0	10	<u>10</u>	14**
Jokes/Riddles	2	2	<u>4</u>	3	1	<u>4</u>	0	1	<u>1</u>	0	0	<u>0</u>	9
Poems	3	0	<u>3</u>	3	8	<u>11</u>	0	0	<u>0</u>	0	0	<u>0</u>	14
Legend/Myth	2	0	<u>2</u>	1	6	<u>7</u>	0	1	<u>1</u>	0	1	<u>1</u>	11
Biography/Autob.	5	4	<u>9</u>	6	6	<u>12</u>	2	5	<u>7</u>	2	5	<u>7</u>	35
History	0	1	<u>1</u>	3	0	<u>3</u>	1	1	<u>2</u>	1	1	<u>2</u>	8
Animals	21	4	<u>25</u>	8	6	<u>14</u>	1	2	<u>3</u>	0	0	<u>0</u>	42**
Sports	0	0	<u>0</u>	3	0	<u>3</u>	2	0	<u>2</u>	0	1	<u>1</u>	6
Space	1	0	<u>1</u>	1	1	<u>2</u>	0	0	<u>0</u>	0	0	<u>0</u>	3
How to...	1	0	<u>1</u>	0	1	<u>1</u>	0	0	<u>0</u>	0	0	<u>0</u>	2
Science	8	3	<u>11</u>	4	0	<u>4</u>	0	0	<u>0</u>	0	0	<u>0</u>	15
Geography	0	0	<u>0</u>	0	0	<u>0</u>	0	0	<u>0</u>	1	0	<u>1</u>	1
Holidays	0	0	<u>0</u>	0	1	<u>1</u>	0	0	<u>0</u>	0	0	<u>0</u>	1

* .05 level chi square significance

** .01 level chi square significance

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Restatement of Problem

The major question of this study is whether there is a difference between the books chosen for reading pleasure by second through fifth grade boys and girls. Sub-questions include the following: do boys and girls read differently according to subject area and has this changed recently, do boys read more non-fiction books than girls, is there a correlation between the sex of the author and the sex of the reader and do children have different reading interests as they mature in terms of fiction/non-fiction, men/women authors read and in terms of subject area.

Description of Procedures

A total of 230 second through fifth grade boys and girls from five private schools in the San Francisco Bay area were asked to keep a record of the books they read for pleasure over the period of a month. Participating schools included the San Francisco Montessori School, the Waldorf School, the French American International School, Rivendell School and Thehujah School. The students recorded the books on a record sheet according to name of book, author, fiction/non-fiction and the subject category of the book.

After the data were collected, it was analyzed by the chi square test according to the subjects of this study: Boy/Girl Differences According to Subject Area, Preferences

for Fiction or Non-fiction Among Boys and Girls, Preferences of Girls to Read Books by Women Authors, of Boys to Read Books by Men Authors, Changes in Reading Interests as Grade Level Increases.

Major Findings and Conclusions

Although there are many similarities in types of books chosen for reading pleasure by second through fifth grade girls and boys, there are also significant differences in choices they make.

Girls read many more books in the area of family stories than do boys, although this is also a popular area for boys. Girls also read more romance and historical fiction than do boys. Boys read more animal books and science than do girls. There was no significant difference between boys and girls in the popular categories of adventure, mystery, funny stories and fantasy/horror books. Students read more fiction (959 books read) than non-fiction (111 books read).

This research supports findings of previous studies that there are boy/girl differences in reading interests, although it differs in some specifics. For example, girls were not shown to be reading more sports books than previously; girls did not show a preference over boys for poetry or fantasy and, although boys read more science and sports books, their main interest is in fiction reading, contrary to previous research findings.

The boys in this study did read more non-fiction books than did girls, substantiating former research on this subject.

Girls tended to read more books written by women authors and boys tended to read more books written by men authors.

In some areas student interests in reading did change as they got older. Girls read more fiction as they matured and both boys and girls read less non-fiction as they progressed to fifth grade. There is a strong pattern for girls to read more books written by women authors as they get older. As both boys and girls increased in grade level, they tended to read more adventure, mystery, science fiction, historical fiction and family stories and fewer books in the areas of fantasy/horror and animals. These findings support previous research indicating that student reading patterns do change as they get older, but do not support findings that more non-fiction is read as students mature. In fact, in this study fewer non-fiction books were read in the upper grades.

Recommendations for Further Investigation

Two major findings not found in previous research were the result of this study: 1) that girls do tend to read more books written by women authors and boys tend to read more books written by men authors and that in the case of the girls, they read more books by women authors as they mature, and 2) that students read less non-fiction as they

grow older. Both of these findings merit further research and substantiation.

Of concern is the fact that students do not show very much interest in reading non-fiction or poetry books. Studies involving teachers teaching particularly to interest students in these areas would be of value in terms of balancing reading habits and general enrichment. Would such teaching make a difference in terms of student's reading for pleasure? If teachers made a point to interest more girls in non-fiction, in particular, would these efforts be reflected in what girls chose to read on their own?

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

Guidelines for Introduction of Study to Classes

In order to introduce the "Record Sheet" and "Book Category Sheet," say:

"This month you are going to have the opportunity to participate in a study to see what kind of books students your age like to read. These can be books from home, from the library, from the classroom- just any book you've read because you wanted to read it, not for a school assignment. You will each get a "Record Sheet" so that you can record the books you read and a "Book Category Sheet" which will help you decide what category is right for your book. You will keep these... (either in a homework folder or place in the classroom according to what the teacher decides is best). Are there any questions?"

(Pass out the stapled sheets.) "First you need to fill out the top of the "Record Sheet." Does everybody have a pencil? (Have extras to distribute if not.) First write your full name and the name of your school (write this on the board for younger students, if necessary) where it says to do that. (Wait, answer questions.) Then write your age, grade and check boy if you are a boy and girl if you are a girl.

"Now I'll tell you how to fill out the next line when you are recording a book. Do not write anything now. After you write the name of your book in the line under where it says

"Name of Book," you have to write the name of the author. Please put down the first and last name of the author because I need to know if the book was written by a man or a woman. Sometimes an author may use just first initials like L.D. Stone or you may not know if it's a man or a woman from the name. In this case, you need to look at the book jacket and see if you can find out from what is written about the author. Please tell me by writing "W" for woman and "M" for man beside the name. If you can't find out, it's O.K. as I can go to the library and see if I can find it there. Next, you have to decide if your book is fiction or non-fiction. Does anybody know the difference? (If not, you explain it according to the definition at the bottom of the "Record Sheet.") If you can't remember the difference, look at what it says at the bottom of the "Record Sheet" (show where) or ask your teacher. Then you have to decide what your book is about and indicate this where it says "Book is About" on the "Record Sheet." To do this you can use the "Book Category Sheet." Please look at this. You don't need to write anything on this as it is just for your information and reference. I'll read through these categories and if you have a question about what they mean, raise your hand. (Do this and explain the categories as necessary to younger students. Talk about if the categories would more likely be fiction or non-fiction.) Some books might seem to fit into more than one category and you will need to decide which

is the closest category to the main idea of the book. If you get stuck, think about what section would be right for the book in the library or ask your teacher, your parents or a librarian. Do you have any questions about the book categories?

"Now, to start, if you can, I'd like you to think of one good book you're reading now or that you've finished in the last few days and record it on the "Record Sheet." If you have questions, please raise your hands and either I or your teacher will help you. If you can't think of a book, you can work or read quietly at your seat until we are finished. This is not a contest to see who can read the most books. I'm not interested in the number of books you can read but in the kind of books. You won't be graded on this and it will make no difference to you in school. If you find you don't read any books in the next month, that's O.K. Please only record books after you have finished them. If you'd be interested, when the study is finished, I can send your teacher the results. Are there any other questions?" (Help the students as they fill out the "Record Sheets.")

APPENDIX B RECORD SHEET

check one

Name

School

Age

Grade

Boy

Girl

Name of Book

Author (person who wrote
the book, use first name
and last name)

Fiction

Non-
fiction

Book is about:

37

Fiction: a story which is not true, which is made up by the author.
44 Non-fiction: a story or information which is true, something that really happened.

APPENDIX C
BOOK CATEGORY SHEET

Choose one category which best describes your book:

38

Animals (true life stories or information)

Adventure (more possibly true-to-life stories
about boys and girls, their adventures)

Biography (about a person who really lived, includes
autobiography, non-fiction)

Crafts

Family stories (stories involving relationships in
a family, stories about children)

Fairy tales/fables

Fantasy/horror (include supernatural, ghost stories)

Funny stories (including funny animal adventures)

Geography

History (life in the past, non-fiction)

Historical fiction

Hobbies

Holidays

How to... (do something, make something)

Jokes and riddles

Mystery

Myth and legend

Nature

Other countries

Plants

Poetry

Romance (love stories)

Science

Science Fiction

Space

Sports

Travel (true stories of traveling)

* If you get stuck, think of what section in the library you would find the book.